

## BLM Utah RAC/RecRAC Meeting Minutes

May 5, 2016

Bureau of Land Management, Utah State Office

Monument Conference Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

440 West 200 South, Salt Lake City, UT

RAC members in attendance: Jay Tanner, Heidi Redd, Dan McClendon, Chad Baker, Steve Slater, Christopher Robinson, Jim Allison, Steve Burr, Bill Cox, Troy Forrest, and Willie Grayeyes.

BLM employees in attendance: Jenna Whitlock, Sherry Foot, Lola Bird, Cory Roegner, Aaron Curtis, Ashley Losey, Quincy Bahr, Jeff Fontana, Kim Finch and Ryan Sutherland.

Individuals who participated via phone: RAC members Callee Butcher and Cimarron Chacon, and BLM presenters Dawna Ferris and Myron Jeffs.

### **Election of Officers**

Bill Cox recommended keeping Jim Allison as Chairperson and Steve Burr as Vice Chairperson. Troy Forrest seconded the motion. The group voted to keep Jim Allison as Chairperson and Steve Burr as Vice Chairperson for 2016.

### **What's Happening in BLM Utah: Jenna Whitlock, BLM-Utah Acting State Director**

- Two Master Leasing Plans are in the works – Moab and San Rafael Desert. These plans look at oil and gas decisions and where this type of activity is most appropriate considering all uses. Potash is also being considered in these plans.
- Major oil and gas projects - Crescent Point, Monument Butte, and Chapita Wells. The BLM is currently working to get ahead of the ozone issue.
- The Coal Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement public meeting is May 19.
- Coal projects - Flat Canyon, Greens Hollow and Alton.
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Grazing EIS – working on range of alternatives – a Draft EIS will be issued later this year.
- Wild horses and burros – the BLM has signed agreement with SITLA – agencies will work together to determine where horses should be gathered from state land. Gathered burros last month from the Sinbad burro management area for research.
- Lake Mountain Target shooting closure – Land Use Plan Amendment. The EA is out for comment and the public information open house is scheduled for May 11.
- Bonneville Salt Flats – too wet to race last two years. A Summit with racing community, delegation members, and researchers will be held on May 17.

### **Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) Overview: Cory Roegner, BLM and Joanna Wilson, Forest Service (handout provided upon request)**

- BLM-Utah hosted 7.5 million visitors in FY 2015. The Forest Service in Utah hosted 11 million visitors.
- In Utah, the BLM and Forest Service both work through the RAC for fee proposals (Rec-Rac).
- BLM is focusing on maintaining existing recreation sites vs adding new sites.
- The BLM develops business plans for recreation sites. This includes determining what fees will be.

- Recreation fees collected include special recreation permit fees.
- Forest Service visitor use numbers are calculated through random sampling.
- BLM calculates visitor numbers through entrance stations. For dispersed sites, it is random sampling like the Forest Service.
- BLM sets fees commensurate with fees and services in public sector – fair market value - keep level with private sector.
- FLREA provides agencies with authority to collect recreation fees and requires public outreach before making changes to fees.
- To establish new fees, a draft business plan must be developed. Fee rates are based on fair market value. Public involvement is required before adding new fees or increasing existing fees. Utah Rec-Rac involvement is also required.
- RAC/ Rec-Rac duties – make recommendations on fees – the majority of the group must be in agreement regarding the fee proposal.
- Steve Burr currently serves as the Rec-Rac work coordinator.
- Economic effects are considered when setting fees. The BLM tries to be comparable to the Forest Service and State Parks.
- Indian creek business plan called for fees as well as dispersed camping areas.

### **Recognition of past RAC members**

Past RAC members Frank White, Carl Albrecht and Bill Hopkin were recognized and thanked for their service on the Utah RAC.

### **Recreation Fee Proposal: Myron Jeffs, Henry Mountain Field Station (handout provided upon request)**

The Richfield Field Office presented the results of a recreation fee pilot project that was approved by the Recreation RAC in November 2014. The pilot, implemented at McMillan Spring and Lonesome Beaver Campgrounds, required visitors to pay the amount they felt their camping experience was worth, based upon the benefits and services provided. Myron Jeff requested RecRAC support to make the fee schedule (that was previously approved for one year) permanent.

- Original proposal applied to all campgrounds.
- A one-year fee pilot was approved in Nov 2014.
- One public comment from an individual in Ohio.
- There are 3 fee-based campgrounds on the Henry Mountains.
- During 2015, Lonesome Beaver (annual visitation 357) and McMillan Springs (annual visitation 1,121) there was no minimum camping fee – visitors were asked to pay what they felt their experience was worth. Fees collected during 2015 were \$661 for Lonesome Beaver and \$1,104 for McMillan Springs.

#### Lonesome Beaver

22% increase over 2014

132% increase over 5-year average

\$7.66 per night

#### McMillan Springs

133% increase over 2014

145% increase over 5-year average

\$8.64 per night

- Total 2013 operating expenses for McMillan Springs was \$9,800 and Lonesome Beaver was \$8,300.
- Average number of visitors - 2.5 people per vehicle for visitors on Henry Mountain.
- The main recreation use on Henry Mountains is hunting and wildlife viewing.
- Steve Burr suggested that we could possibly give visitors the opportunity to express why their experience is worth what they paid. This could be added to the fee envelope.
- Campground donations fall under FLPMA. RecRAC could help develop a policy for Utah.
- BLM wants to make the no minimum fee schedule permanent. If outcome does not meet desired conditions, the fee would be set at \$5 per night. Want to leave flexibility with local managers.
- Heidi Redd suggested posting information on how much it costs to run the campground and what it would cost per night to completely cover those costs.

**Overview of Past Recreation Fee Recommendations: Cory Roegner, Recreation Program Lead**  
(handout provided upon request)

Fee proposals submitted to RAC since enactment of FLREA: 100

Fee increases approved: 76

New fees: 18

New fees approved with modifications: 2

New fees denied or tabled: 4

A recreation fee program tool box was instituted in 2013. This required business plans. Visitor increases 2 million over a five-year period. In the past, BLM fees were below fair market value. Business plans have helped agencies update fees and stay current. The BLM will continue to re-evaluate fees. For REA money in 2015, the BLM brought in more money than was expended for labor and operations. Appropriated money supplements REA money. We retain 100% of recreation money. For the most part, money is kept at the site where collected.

Fee dollars at work:

Red Cliffs Recreation Area

Campground re-design including bridges, shade shelters, tables, parking areas, fee booth, stairs to day-use area

Deer Creek Campground

Used ACE landscape intern to design a site plan.

Fee station, kiosks, new vault toilets, accessible campsites, separation fencing, trailhead,

Westwater Canyon

Special recreation permit fees

Boat ramp, removal of invasive species, high-water sediment removal, Dewey Bridge

Moab Field Office Recreation Areas

High-water sediment removal, Dewey Bridge

We are always looking for ways to improve our program and welcome feedback

Statewide Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Application Fees

The application fees would offset the cost of processing permits.

Current fee: minimum of \$105 or 3% of adjusted gross revenue.

Proposing to establish a \$200 app fee, \$100 renewal fee and \$200 transfer fee.

Public outreach was conducted in 2014 and 2015 with the following: Utah Outfitters and Guides Association, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument's annual outfitter and guide workshop and Utah's Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. All who have been approached thus far are supportive.

*A Federal Register Notice* will be developed for a proposed supplementary rule to start charging the fees. This will involve a 60-day comment period. Final rules will be published 30 days prior to effective date. RAC members will be notified when the FRN publishes so they can notify constituents.

**Connecting with Utah Communities Strategy: Cory Roegner, Recreation Program Lead** (handout provided upon request)

In 2014, the BLM Washington Office released a national 5-year strategy for recreation and visitor services. BLM-Utah released a five-year strategy in 2015.

The goal is to provide recreation opportunities that communities value most, prioritize recreation areas that provide the greatest public benefit and leverage partner's resources.

#### Internal Actions

Train workforce to engage in community relations

Community-centered approach

Improve outreach efforts

Use alternative funding sources

#### External Actions

Capitalize on backyard to backcountry

Work with new groups such as lodging, outfitters, chambers of commerce

Outdoor educational institutions

Cory recommended that the RAC work on a donations policy for BLM-Utah. They could identify criteria and marketing ideas. Christopher Robinson likes the idea of donations and engaging young people to care for public lands. A donation policy would need to spell out how dollars at each site would be spent.

Youth is a huge priority for the Secretary of the Interior. The RAC would like a presentation on the BLM Utah youth program at the next meeting.

The BLM manager in Heidi's community does not live in the community or in Utah. She feels the BLM manager should live there to connect with their community.

No public comments were given during the public comment period; however, Chad Baker, RAC member, gave the following comments: the coal pause has good goals in terms of royalties, but he has concerns about the approach the department is taking. Coal is a huge part of the Utah economy and keeps energy costs low. We need continued and safe use of these resources. Coal plays important part in world for electricity. Praised the BLM for moving forward on the Enefit right-of-way project.

## **RecRAC Approval of Fee Recommendation**

Steve Burr made a motion to make the fee structure of no minimum fee permanent.

If the outcome doesn't meet Field Office conditions, could establish the fee at \$5.

An alternative would be that if the new fee structure doesn't work, it would need to come back to the RAC before going to a different amount.

Modifying the camping fee in the future would not require additional public comment and a new business plan.

The RAC approved Myron Jeff's proposal to make the no minimum fee permanent. If a fee change is needed in the future, it will need to be presented to the RAC for approval. All members approved the proposal with the exception of Chad Baker who liked the adaptive management component.

**Planning 2.0 (draft planning rule): Quincy Bahr, Planning Coordinator** (handout provided upon request)

- Improve the BLMs ability to respond to social and environmental change
- Provide opportunities for collaboration
- Implement a landscape approach
- The public comment period was extended to May 25, 2016
- A final rule is expected by the end of 2016

Plan components:

Designations

Resource use determination

Monitoring/evaluation

Implementation strategies:

Management measures

Monitoring procedures

There are 16 land use plans in Utah.

**Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Updates: Quincy Bahr, Planning Coordinator** (handout provided upon request)

The Fish and Wildlife Service found that the Greater Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing.

The Fish and Wildlife Service will re-evaluate in 5 years to see if the plans are working.

Since the Record of Decision was signed in September 2015, the BLM has held public open houses and stakeholder meetings to help people understand what is contained in the plans. They also met with local working groups across the state.

The RAC could give BLM-Utah input on how to get information into people's hands to explain the plans.

Plan concepts

Minimize additional surface disturbance

Improve habitat condition

Reduce threat of fire to Sage-Grouse habitat

#### Grazing

Plans do not close any allotments or reduce active AUMs

Plans recognize the need to evaluate habitat based on local ecological conditions

#### Adaptive management

Monitoring will evaluate the success of actions to conserve sage-grouse and habitat. Plans establish hard and soft triggers for sage-grouse populations and habitat. The Sheep Rocks area may have hit a hard trigger. The BLM is working closely with the State of Utah on predator control issues and translocations. We also have funding for vegetation projects. 40 sage-grouse from Box Elder and Parker Mountain were translocated into the Sheep Rocks area in spring 2016.

A comment was made that regulations should be relaxed when we have successes.

#### Next steps for implementation

Continued coordination with State of Utah and the Forest Service

Issue implementation guidance to provide for consistent implementation of plan amendment actions

Ongoing engagement is critical to implementation

#### **Respect and Protect Anti-looting Campaign and Project Archaeology and Statewide Site Stewardship Partnerships; Ashley Losey, Archaeologist**

The Respect and Protect Anti-looting Campaign was launched on May 4.

The BLM is looking for partners to help get the message out.

The campaign includes videos on how to respectfully visit archeological sites.

This is just part of the BLM's efforts on cultural resources protection.

To protect cultural resources in Utah, BLM is taking a three-prong approach:

**Education** – Respect and Protect outreach campaign and partner with whom to expand our Project Archaeology program – want to get it out to schools statewide.

**Stewardship** – looking for a partner to recruit and organize volunteers into a statewide site stewardship program.

**Enforcement** – a new Memorandum of Understanding with Friends of Cedar Mesa for offering up to a \$2500 reward for successful prosecution of individuals found looting in San Juan County. Also includes a looting hotline which allows individuals to report these incidents; they have the option to remain anonymous.

- Looting on public lands remains a considerable issue. For example, from October 2011 to April 2016 in one field office, law enforcement has record of 25 incidents of looting. There is undoubtedly considerably more that is simply never reported. Further, there are a limited number of law enforcement officers to cover large areas of public land.
- While enforcement is important, BLM is amping up its public outreach to really address this issue. This includes:
  - Working to engage the tourism industry to address international visitors to Utah.
  - The BLM will be presenting at the upcoming Utah Tribal Leaders Council in Cedar City.
- Can we use technology to catch looters? There are tens of thousands of sites on millions of acres to protect.

- Rather than rely on law enforcement alone or expensive technologies, we want to get information into public lands users' hands to educate them to do the right thing so that we all can continue to enjoy these resources into the future.
- The Respect and Protect effort is being done in partnership with Tread Lightly!.

**Red Cliffs/Beaver Dam National Conservation Areas (NCA) Planning Update: Dawna Ferris, NCA Manager (handout provided upon request)**

- The Red Cliffs NCA is a mitigation reserve for the Washington County habitat conservation plan. Non-motorized recreation is a popular use in the NCA.
- The NCAs were created by the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act
- The Act mandated planning efforts for the new NCAs.
- A draft travel management plan will be released after the Records of Decision have been signed.
- The planning effort started in 2010. Draft plans were issued for public comment in July 2015. Open houses were held in Sept 2015.
- 6,000 comments received – the St. George Field Office is currently reviewing and responding to the comments.
- Proposed plans will be released for a 30-day protest period and 60-day governor's consistency review.
- Issues include grazing, wildfires, invasive species, recreation and visitor services, special status plants and wildlife species, heritage and paleo sites, lands and realty management.
- Motorized recreation will be open, closed or limited to designated routes.
- The Preferred Alternative is Alternative B, a balanced approach to management and restrictions of land uses.

**Potential topics for Resource Advisory Council assistance:**

- Lake Mountain target shooting plan amendment: Recreation and cultural issues, public meetings are coming up soon
- Donation policy for recreation site donations
- Respect and Protect plan implementation
- Planning 2.0 – comment on proposed rule
- Sage grouse Plan Implementation – grazing issues, fire, invasive species and juniper encroachment. How to best communicate with ranchers and others. Jenna will have her staff determine how the RAC could best help with sage-grouse
- Coal Programmatic EIS – RAC members are invited to attend the May 19 public meeting
- Topics that Jim Allison is most interested in working on: target shooting and respect and protect
- Topics that Steve Burr most interested in working on: development of recreation donation policy and the Planning 2.0 Rule.

After discussion on the various topics listed above, the group made the decision to form the following subcommittees:

**Lake Mountain Target Shooting**

Subcommittee Members: Jim Allison, Steve Slater

**Planning 2.0 Rule**

Subcommittee Members: Steve Burr, Troy Forrest, Chad Baker

**Three Creeks Allotment EA**

Subcommittee Members: Troy Forrest, Jay Tanner, Bill Cox

Subcommittee members asked the BLM for a copy of the RAC's 2012 Three Creeks letter

Subcommittees will meet and work on their assigned topics. Subcommittees will then present their information during the full RAC conference call meeting on June 29.

**Dates for next meetings:**

Cimarron Chacon suggested that the RAC meet more often and committee members agreed. Members enjoyed last year's field trip in Monticello and would like to have a field trip at least once per year.

A RAC conference call meeting will be scheduled for June 29. Topics of discussion include:

- Lake Mountain
- Planning 2.0
- Three Creeks Grazing Allotment

The next in-person meeting will be scheduled for July 27 or 28. Topics of discussion could include:

- Respect and Protect Campaign
- Development of a recreation donation policy – BLM staff will frame up a starting point for the RAC to begin working from
- Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Implementation
- Coal Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
- BLM-Utah Youth Program Update

The group also discussed the following questions:

Do we want to draft suggestions for improving processes for public land designations going forward?

Should RAC write a formal letter to Bishop, Secretary or President regarding Public Lands Initiative?

The group decided no.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Jim Allison, RAC Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

6/13/2016